

ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

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IVAN IV CONSULTS HIS ELITE SUBJECTS

The relationship of the ruler to his advisors was a central issue of sixteenth-century Muscovite political theory. This article explores how narrative sources presented the ideal paradigm of the ruler consulting his subjects to Ivan in practice by analyzing passages containing forms of the verb *sovetovati* (to advise, to consult with) pertaining to Ivan. Such references did not occur uniformly throughout Ivan's reign. Two brief clusters, a smaller one when Grand Princess Elena exercised authority, and a much denser one dealing with the eventual conquest of Kazan, were each followed by periods of only erratic and scattered references. This disparity cannot be explained by any hostility during Ivan's maturity on the part of the compilers of narrative accounts, because those narratives, although they did not regurgitate every earlier usage of the concept, did not rewrite the past consistently to erase previous references. This chronological disparity in references to consultation cannot be attributed to content. Overall the chronicles did not lack for opportunities to allude to consultation. Though foreign policy decisions dealing with Lithuania and Kazan, dominate passages from narrative sources before 1554 that invoke consultation, Muscovite history still was not lacking in foreign policy resolved in a consultative manner between 1538 and 1549 or 1552 and 1567. Although it is tempting to see the apparent attrition of references to Ivan's consultations with the elite after 1552 to Ivan's growing 'autocratic' pretensions to rule without interference by his elite, such a line of reasoning cannot explain the comparable 'decline' of references to consultation between 1538 and 1549. Therefore proposing a rational explanation for the pattern of allusions to Ivan's consultation with the elite would be premature. Refs 19.

Keywords: Ivan IV, annals, chronicles, meetings, consultations etiquette, elite, Muscovy.

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ИВАН IV КОНСУЛЬТИРУЕТСЯ СО СВОИМИ ПРИБЛИЖЕННЫМИ

Отношение правителя к его советникам было центральным вопросом московской политической теории в XVI в. В данной статье автор показывает, как повествовательные источники представляют идеальную парадигму правителя, консультирующегося со своими советниками, анализируя отрывки, относящиеся к Ивану и содержащие глагол *sovetovati* (посоветовать, проконсультироваться). Такие сообщения не располагаются равномерно по всему царствованию Ивана. Два коротких кластера: меньший, когда великая княгиня Елена осуществляет власть, и гораздо больший, связанный с окончательным завоеванием Казани. За каждым из них следуют периоды с беспорядочными и разбросанными сообщениями. Такую ситуацию нельзя объяснить

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какой-либо враждебностью во времена зрелости Ивана со стороны составителей летописей, поскольку эти нарративы хотя и не пересказывают все ранее использованные концепции, но и не переписывают прошлое, чтобы стереть предыдущие сообщения. Хронологический разрыв в сообщениях о совещаниях не может быть отнесен и к событийной стороне дела. В целом в летописях нет нехватки событий для возможности сослаться на подобные совещания. Если внешнеполитические решения, касающиеся Литвы и Казани, до 1554 г. обильно появляются на страницах повествовательных источников и вызывают совещания, то московская история не бедна внешнеполитическими решениями между 1538 и 1549, а также между 1552 и 1567 гг., которые также могли бы вызвать совещания и консультации. Хотя это очень заманчиво — связать очевидное исчезновение сообщений о совещаниях Ивана с элитой после 1552 г. с растущими «самодержавными» претензиями Ивана править без вмешательства со стороны элиты, но такое направление рассуждений не может объяснить заметное «сокращение» упоминаний о консультациях между 1538 и 1549 гг. Поэтому предлагать рациональное объяснение картины упоминаний о консультационных совещаниях Ивана с элитой было бы преждевременным. Библиогр. 19 назв.

Ключевые слова: Иван IV, летописи, летописцы, совещания, этикет консультаций, элита, Московское царство.

The relationship of the ruler to his advisors was a central issue of sixteenth-century Muscovite political theory. A wise ruler consulted good advisors, an unwise ruler consulted bad advisors [Bogatyrev 2000, pp. 37–99]. In their correspondence Tsar Ivan the Terrible and émigré boyar Prince Andrei Kurbskii debated not whether Ivan should pay heed to his advisors, but whether the advisors he chose were good or bad [Bogatyrev 2000, pp. 84–86].

This article explores how narrative sources presented the ideal paradigm of the ruler consulting his subjects to Ivan in practice by analyzing passages containing forms of the verb *sovetovati* (to advise, to consult with) pertaining to Ivan¹. It does not discuss instances in which boyars, gentry, clerics, military commanders, or non-Russians consulted among themselves. Nor does it address the historical reality of the consultations to which the passages allude. In some cases it is clear that the consultation was strictly formal. When he was six years old, Ivan did not “consult” his mother, he listened to her. The adult Ivan could not derive much benefit from consulting his younger brother Prince Iurii Vasil'evich, if historians have correctly inferred that Prince Iurii was a deaf-mute. On occasion, when Ivan “consulted” his boyars, he actually told them what they thought. Most of the time, however, it is impossible to penetrate the literary etiquette of consultation to determine whether the consultation was genuine. This article examines only the articulation of that etiquette, when and how chroniclers, compilers, redactors, or authors applied the ideal of consultation to events, not the events themselves.

I have searched the contents of all the major Moscow chronicles and narratives from the beginning of Ivan's reign until the cessation of the Moscow central chronicle-writing tradition in 1567. This source base includes the *Voskresenskaia letopis'* [PSRL 1859, vol. 8; RL 1998], the *Nikonovskaia letopis'* [PSRL 1965, vol. 13], the *Letopisets nachala tsarstva* [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 9–116], and the *L'vovskaia letopis'* [RL 1999], which constitute the “early” chronicles, compiled between the 1530s and 1560, and the *Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodosloviia* [Stepennaia kniga tsarstogo rodosloviia po drevneishim spiskam. Teksty i kommentarii, 2008], and three components of the *Litsesvoi letopisnyi svod*, the *Tsarstvennaia kniga* [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 409–532], the *Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*

¹ I have excluded allusions to the “council” (*sovet*) as an institution, “the” Royal Council (*Duma*) or just to a meeting, and to “advisors” “councillors” (*sovetniki*) as such, but I do mention uses of *sovet* to mean “advice” given to Ivan.

[PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 117–216, 315–355] and the *Lebedevskaia letopis'* [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 224–314], the “later” chronicles and narratives, which definitely date to after 1563. Regional or “short” chronicles, of private or monastic origin, have too little evidence on this theme to warrant inclusion in this essay.

Historians, archivists, and *literaturovedy* have reached no consensus on the evolution of Moscow chronicle-writing after 1530 [Kloss 1980]. We do not know who wrote most chronicles, or who patronized them, whether state bureaus or the chancellery of the metropolitan of Moscow and All Rus'. We can usually identify the stages of the creation of different compilations from textual evidence. Although some specialists date the *Stepennaia kniga* [Sirenov 2007; *Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodoslovii*” i genezis russkogo istoricheskogo soznaniia 2011; Sirenov 2010; *Stepennaia kniga tsarstogo rodoslovii* po drevneishim spiskam. Teksty i kommentarii 2007–2012] or the *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod* [Amosov, 1988; Belokon', Morozov V. V., Morozov S. A. 2003] to after Ivan's death in 1584, without resolving these disagreements or discussing the issue in detail, I shall follow the majority scholarly opinion that assigns them to the years of Ivan's reign. All scholars agree that the compilers of the “later” narratives used the “early” narratives as sources. For that reason, I will not present textual comparisons of passages in different sources recounting the same event, although I will allude to variations in terminology.

Of course, terminology that did not include the verb *sovetovati* could also denote consultation. Consultation might have taken place any time clerics or boyars petitioned Ivan, such as when Metropolitan Makarii, bishops, archimandrites, and all boyars petitioned Ivan to remarry after the death of his first wife Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Anastasiia in 1560 [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 288], when the clergy interceded for mercy for someone in disgrace, or when in 1554 Ivan *govoril* with boyars concerning the capital punishment he had imposed on Prince Semen Rostovskii for attempting to flee the country [RL 1999, p. 172]. Similarly, we might infer consultation in any instance which expresses a notion of collective leadership, such as every charter or decree that began with the stock phrase, *tsar' ukazal i boyare prigovorili* (or “all the boyars” assented), or the *Sudebnik* of 1550, issued by Ivan and his brother Prince Iurii and the boyars [Pamiatniki russkogo prava 1956, p. 233], or when in 1556 Ivan *prigovoril* with Metropolitan Makarii, princes, gentry, and *voevody* to regulate precedence, or in the same year when Ivan *prigovorili* with his brother Prince Iurii, his cousin Prince Vladimir Andreevich Staritskii, and boyars on the service obligations for landowners [RL 1999, pp. 202–203]. However, the connection between these linguistic forms and consultation remains only implicit. Indeed, one might just as plausibly presuppose that any time the metropolitan “blessed” a decision or action of Ivan, some communication had taken place previously between Ivan and the metropolitan. However, only the verb *sovetovati* unambiguously articulates “consultation,” which is why I have chosen to focus exclusively on that word at this time.

Passages in the narrative sources in which Ivan “consults” his elite fall into several chronological groups: 1) references from 1533 to 1538 which involve Ivan and his mother, Grand Princess Elena Glinskaia; 2) isolated references to Ivan consulting his elite from 1538 to 1549 during his minority; 3) a major cluster of consultations between 1550 and 1553 involving Muscovite campaigns to conquer Kazan'; and 4) scattered references from 1553 to the end of chronicle-writing in Moscow in 1567².

² It was not necessary for my purpose to reconcile the different years to which compilers assigned passages which seem to depict the same event.

In 1533 according to the *Letopisets nachala tsarstva* grand prince Ivan Vasil'evich of All Rus' *posovetoval* with his mother, grand princess Elena, and boyars about receiving Crimean envoys [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 11]. In 1535 according to *Voskresenskaia letopis'*, *Letopisets nachala tsarstva*, the *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, *L'vovskaia letopis'*, *Stepennaia kniga*, and *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, Ivan consulted (*sovet sotvori* or *sovetovali*) the boyars concerning foreign relations with the Grand Principality of Lithuania, or "having consulted" (*sovetovav*) the boyars, decided how to respond to a Lithuanian threat against Smolensk. Because compilers equated *sovet sotvori* with verbal forms of *sovetovati*, I have translated the former phrase as "consulted" rather than "held a council (meeting)" with only an implication that the purpose of the meeting was for Ivan to "consult" the elite on the issue [PSRL 1859, p. 290; RL 1998, p. 378, 381; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 14; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 81, 86, 94; RL 1999, p. 16; *Stepennaia kniga* vol. 2 2008, p. 348; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 423].

In 1535, according to the *Nikovskaia letopis'* and the *L'vovskaia letopis'*, Ivan and Elena, *posovetovav* with the boyars, undertook a coinage reform [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 93; RL 1999, p. 20].

In 1535 and 1536, according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva*, *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, *L'vovskaia letopis'*, and *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, Ivan and Elena *posovetovali* or *sovetovali* with the boyars on whether to recall Muscovite Tatar client Chingissid Tsar' Shah-Ali from exile, and, having done that, whether it was proper, given that Ivan was only a child, for Elena herself to receive him [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 40; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 101, 102; RL 1999, pp. 25, 26].

Therefore, narratives not only legitimated Elena's leading role in government by associating her repeatedly with her son [Halperin 2008, pp. 41–46], but also sometimes enhanced that legitimacy by invoking consultation with other royals and boyars, although on other occasions the boy Ivan seemingly consulted boyars by himself.

In 1538 according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva*, *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, and *L'vovskaia letopis'* Ivan decided not to send military forces against Kazan' after having consulted (*sovetovav*) with the boyars [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 31, 122; RL 1999, p. 41].

In 1538–1539 according to *L'vovskaia letopis'* and *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, the boyar prince Shuiskie became exceedingly angry that boyars I. F. Bel'skii and M. V. Tuchkov *sovetovali* grand prince Ivan to raise Prince Iu. M. Golitsyn to the rank of boyar and I. I. Khabarov to the rank of *okol'nichei*, implying that consultation between Ivan and two boyars had previously taken place [RL 1999, p. 45; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 432]³.

In 1547 according to *Tsarstvennaia kniga* Ivan, at a *sovet*, *sovetoval* with Metropolitan Makarii about his desire to marry. The boyars *sovetuiushcha* with Ivan, agreeing with his preference for choosing a domestic, rather than a foreign, bride. With Makarii's blessing and the *sovet* (advice) of the boyars, it was also decided that Ivan would be crowned tsar [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 432].

References to Ivan's consultations between Elena's death and 1550, the beginning of major Kazan' campaigns, are isolated and infrequent. The most interesting concerns Ivan's decisions in 1547 to get married and be crowned tsar. A later chronicle, *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, uniquely attributes these decisions to consultation with Metropolitan Makarii and boyars.

³ The princes Shuiskie boycotted the *sovet*, meaning "the council," the Royal Council, over this decision. *Sovet* also meant the "Royal Council," not "advice" in the passage in *Tsarstvennaia kniga* describing boyar feuding while at *sovet* with Ivan, but not consulting with Ivan at the time [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 443].

Between 1550 and 1552, as Muscovy waged three campaigns, the third ultimately successful, to conquer Kazan', Ivan consulted the Muscovite ecclesiastical and court elite with greater frequency than at any other time during his reign.

In 1550, according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva, Nikonovskaia letopis', L'vovskaia letopis', Stepennaia kniga* and *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, Ivan twice consulted, either *sotvoriat sovet* or *sovetovati*, inter alia with Metropolitan Makarii, his brother Prince Iurii, his cousin Prince Vladimir, Tsar' Shah-Ali, boyars, and *voevody* on how to attack Kazan' [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 57, 59, 158, 160; RL 1999, p. 80; Stepennaia kniga 2008, vol. 2, p. 158; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 460].

In 1551 according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva, Nikonovskaia letopis', L'vovskaia letopis'*, and *Tsarstvennaia kniga* Ivan began *sovetovati* or *sovetuet*, inter alia, several times with his brother Prince Iurii, boyars, princes, Tsar' Shah-Ali, all boyars, and *voevody* on establishing an advanced armory at Sviazhsk and on how to protect Orthodox Christians from Kazan' raids. Eventually these consultants *sovetuiut* Ivan to lead the campaign himself [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 60, 72, 73, 73; PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 85, 177–78, 464; RL 1999, p. 103].

In 1552 according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva, Nikonovskaia letopis', Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*, and *Tsarstvennaia kniga* Ivan repeatedly consulted (*posovetovati*) Metropolitan Makarii, on dealing with both the Crimea and Kazan'. Makarii advised (*sovetovali*) him to use holy water to cure an epidemic among the Muscovite army en route to Kazan', advice (*sovet*) that Ivan joyously accepted, and to conduct a liturgy for the troops. Ivan also *sovetuet* his brother Prince Iurii, his cousin Prince Vladimir, Tsar' Shah-Ali, boyars, and *voevody* at multiple stages of the campaign [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 74, 75, 82, 94, 95, 84, 191, 202, 476, 477, 478–79, 482, 486, 498, 499.; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 171, 172, 173, 176, 179, 189].

Upon his victorious return to Moscow according to *Letopisets nachala tsarstva, Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*, and *Tsarstvennaia kniga* Ivan expressed his appreciation to Metropolitan Makarii for when he *sovetoval* with him, giving him his blessing and *sovet* [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 112, 113, 518–20; RL 1999, vol. 5, p. 115, 131; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 207–8]. In borrowing one of these passages, *L'vovskaia letopis'* changed *sovetovati* to *mysliti*, Ivan “thought” with his advisors, suggesting, at least this time, the equivalence of the verbs [RL 1999, p. 115]. (Of course, someone could also “think about” something individually).

The ubiquity of references to Ivan's consultations with Metropolitan Makarii, his relatives (his brother and cousin), and boyars during the campaigns to conquer Kazan' might have several causes, but it would be glib to explain it as a reflection of the need for elite unity in the pursuit of a challenging objective. The plethora of references to consultation cannot represent the young Ivan's need to consult more experienced military minds, because he consulted Makarii, not a military expert, and his brother Prince Iurii. Moreover, at this point his cousin Prince Vladimir had no more military experience than Ivan, though some might argue that he had greater military competence, but this is unproven. Why the etiquette of consultation manifested itself so much more tangibly in narratives of these events, compared to other opportunities, remains an open question.

After Muscovy's conquest of Kazan' in 1552, narrative references to Ivan's consultation returned to the modest level of the period after Elena's death until the initiation of the Kazan' campaigns. Judging by the usage of *sovetovati*, Ivan consulted with anyone —

relatives, clerics, or boyars — only rarely at this time, a pattern that continued as long as chronicle-writing continued.

In a related Tatar matter, in 1553 and 1554 according to *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, *L'vovskaia letopis'*, and *Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*, Ivan *sovetoval* with boyars on his As-trakhan' policy [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 234; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 225; RL 1999, p. 170].

In 1561, according to *Nikovskaia letopis'* and *Lebedevskaia letopis'* Ivan heeded *sovet* from Metropolitan Makarii and raised the *igumen* of the Trinity Sergius Monastery to the rank of archimandrite [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, p. 331; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 290].

In 1563, according to the *Nikonovskaia letopis'* and *Lebedevskaia letopis'*, Ivan *sovetoval* with Metropolitan Makarii, his brother Prince Iurii, his cousin Prince Vladimir, and all his boyars on policy leading to the conquest of Polotsk and the further conduct of the war with Lithuania [PSRL 1965, vol. 13, pp. 345, 356; PSRL 1965, vol. 29, pp. 310, 312]. This passage recalls the type of consultation that Ivan conducted in the Kazan' campaigns, but surely the thirty-three year old Ivan had more military experience and expertise in 1563 than the twenty-year old Ivan in 1550, and the need for military advice could still not justify consulting Makarii or Prince Iurii. In general, narratives of the Polotsk campaign drew inspiration from narratives of the 1552 Kazan' campaign, as both resulted in annexation of cities.

Also in 1563, according to the *Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*, on the *sovet* of Metropolitan Makarii, the archbishops, the bishops, and the entire *Osviashchennyi sobor*, Ivan raised the rank of the Archbishop of newly-conquered Polotsk to just below that of the Archbishop of Rostov [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 320].

Finally, in 1565, according to the *Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'*, already during the *oprichnina*, Ivan appointed Galaktion as new bishop of Krutitsa (the bishop of Krutitsa served as *locum tenens* for the metropolitan) with the *sovet* of Metropolitan Afanasii, the archbishops, the bishops, the archimandrites, the *igumeny*, and the entire *Osviashchennyi sobor*, [PSRL 1965, vol. 29, p. 246].

What conclusions can we draw about narrative references to Ivan consulting his clerical and court elite?

First, such references did not occur uniformly throughout Ivan's reign. Two brief clusters, a smaller one when Grand Princess Elena exercised authority, and a much denser one dealing with the eventual conquest of Kazan', were each followed by periods of only erratic and scattered references. This disparity cannot be explained by any hostility during Ivan's maturity on the part of the compilers of narrative accounts, because those narratives, although they did not merely repeat every earlier usage of the concept, did not rewrite the past consistently to erase previous references. The *L'vovskaia letopis'*, *Stepennaia kniga*, and the three segments of the *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod* largely retained references in the earlier *Voskresenskaia letopis'*, *Nikonovskaia letopis'* and *Letopisets nachala tsarstva*. However, the later narratives only rarely invented new allusions to consultation. There are three instances in which later sources contain novel references to consultation: *Tsarstvennaia kniga* added consultation to an older event, Ivan's decision to marry in 1547, while *Aleksandro-Nevskaia letopis'* originated two episodes of consultation concerning ecclesiastical events, the elevation of the status of the archbishop of Polotsk and the selection of the bishop of Krutitsa. Discussion did take place over whether Ivan should remarry after the death of his first wife, Anastasia, in 1560, but the word "consultation" does not appear in the prose. Appointments of other archbishops and bishops were not attributed to consul-

tation. Why later chroniclers and compilers chose to use, or not to use, *sovetovati* to depict Ivan's decision-making cannot be determined.

Second, this chronological disparity in references to consultation cannot be attributed to content. Overall the chronicles did not lack for opportunities to allude to consultation. If foreign policy decisions dealing with Lithuania and Kazan' dominate the passages from narrative sources before 1554 that invoke consultation, Muscovite history did not lack foreign policy decisions between 1538 and 1549 and between 1552 and 1567 other than the conquest of Polotsk, such as the outbreak of the Livonian War, which could have been attributed to consultation.

Finally, although it is tempting to see the apparent attrition of references to Ivan's consultations with the elite after 1552 to Ivan's growing "autocratic" pretensions to rule without interference by his elite, as this writer was at one time so tempted, such a line of reasoning cannot explain the comparable "decline" of references to consultation between 1538 and 1549. Why chroniclers should be less sensitive to the etiquette of consultation after Elena's death, even when dealing with a boy-grand prince, is not obvious. Leaving aside the exaggerated issue of "autocracy," [Halperin 2014, pp. 197–213] it would be premature to see the more rare invocations of consultation as a foretaste of Ivan's desire for unlimited authority manifested later in the creation of the *oprichnina*, partly because allusions to consultation should not be taken as a measure of actual consultation, and partly because we have not yet comprehensively studied other terminology illustrative of consultation. For example, clerics at the 1566 *Zemskii sobor* did offer *sovet* to Ivan, but lay curiae only their "thoughts" (*mysli*) [Prodolzhenie drevnei Rossiiskoi Vivliofiki 1970. pp. 1–42], although clearly from the narrative evidence Ivan could have consulted the boyars at the *Zemskii sobor*. Therefore proposing a rational explanation for the pattern of allusions to Ivan's consultation with the elite would be premature.

For the moment I would conclude only that establishing the ideal of consultation in Muscovy during the reign of Ivan IV is only the first step of historical research. Historians now need to examine the terminology of consultation very carefully to discover new patterns of linguistic usage. Perhaps such research will enable students of Ivan's reign to elaborate standards by which to distinguish his "formal" from his "real" consultations with Muscovy's elite.

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